

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A method of managing navigation information in a computer application, the method comprising:

establishing a global context that can communicate with a plurality of resources, each resource residing in an associated local context;

communicating state information from one or more of the local contexts to the global context; and

maintaining global navigation information based on the communicated state information.

2. The method of claim 1 in which the communication of state information occurs in response to a change in state in one or more of the local contexts.

3. The method of claim 2 in which the change in state in a local context comprises a change in a title associated with a resource or a change in an address associated with the resource, or both.

4. The method of claim 2 in which the change in state in a local context is triggered by input from a user of the computer application.

5. The method of claim 4 in which the user's triggering input comprises one or more of clicking a cursor in a window associated with a resource, clicking on a link in a window associated with a resource, clicking on a Back/Forward navigation button, selecting an address from a displayed history list, or typing an address in an address field.

6. The method of claim 2 in which the change in state in a local context is triggered by a computer process transparently to a computer user.

7. The method of claim 6 in which the transparent triggering comprises a title change notification from a host computer.

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14. The method of claim 1 in which maintenance of the global navigation information comprises pruning a navigation tree.

15. The method of claim 14 in which pruning the navigation tree comprises:
determining that a user of the computer application is accessing a new address; and

deleting forward button state information.
16. The method of claim 1 further comprising changing focus from a current window to a previously accessed window based on the global navigation information.
17. The method of claim 16 in which, if a window associated with the previously accessed address has been closed, spawning a new instance of that window.
18. The method of claim 16 in which changing focus from a current window to a previously accessed window comprises using local-context navigation information maintained by a resource when navigating within that resource's local context.
19. The method of claim 18 in which the resource maintaining local-context navigation information comprises a browser application.
20. The method of claim 1 in which a user can specify whether closing a window associated with a resource results in deletion of the window from the global navigation information.
21. The method of claim 1 in which maintenance of the global navigation information comprises deleting navigation information corresponding to a closed window.
22. The method of claim 1 in which one or more of the resources comprises a browser application.
23. The method of claim 1 in which one or more of the resources comprises a non-browser application.

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24. The method of claim 1 in which the computer application comprises online service client software.

25. The method of claim 1 in which the global navigation information comprises a navigation path to move among resources.

26. The method of claim 1 in which the communicated state information comprises a Uniform Resource Locator address.

27. The method of claim 1 in which the communicated state information comprises a non-internet network address.

28. A method of managing a history list in a computer application, the method comprising:

receiving state information from a plurality of independent resources, each resource residing in an associated local context;

based on the received state information, maintaining a history of resources accessed by a user of the computer application; and

presenting a global-context history list representative of an order in which the resources were accessed.

29. The method of claim 28 further comprising enabling a user of the computer application to return to any of the listed resources by selecting a desired resource from the global-context history list.

30. The method of claim 28 in which a resource communicates state information in response to a change in state in the resource's local context.

31. The method of claim 30 in which the change in state in the resource's local context comprises a change in an address associated with that resource.

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32. The method of claim 30 in which the change in state in the resource's local context comprises a change in a title associated with that resource.

33. The method of claim 28 in which the global-context history list presented to the user selectively omits an identity of one or more of the accessed resources.

34. The method of claim 28 in which maintenance of the history of accessed resources comprises selectively modifying the global-context history list depending on a manner in which a user interacts with the computer application.

35. The method of claim 34 in which the global-context history list is not modified if the manner in which the user interacts with the computer application comprises one or more of clicking a cursor in a window associated with a resource, clicking on a link in a window associated with a resource, clicking on a Back/Forward navigation button, selecting an address from a displayed history list, or typing an address in an address field.

36. The method of claim 28 in which presentation of the global-context history list comprises displaying a drop-down history list to a user.

37. The method of claim 28 in which maintenance of the history comprises adding a new entry to a top of a list if the resource had not been accessed previously.

38. The method of claim 28 in which maintenance of the history comprises rearranging entries in a list if the resource had been accessed previously.

39. The method of claim 28 in which the history of resources corresponds to a navigation path among resources.

40. The method of claim 28 in which the state information received from a resource comprises a Uniform Resource Locator address.

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41. The method of claim 28 in which the state information received from a resource comprises a non-internet network address.

42. A software application environment for a computer system, comprising:
a plurality of resources each having an associated local context;
an application capable of communicating with each of the plurality of resources, the application maintaining global-context navigation information based on state information received from one or more of the resources; and
a navigation mechanism that enables a user of the application to move among resources based on the global-context navigation information.

43. The software application environment of claim 42 further comprising graphical controls that enable a user of an application to move among resources based on the global-context navigation information.

44. Software, stored on a computer-readable medium, comprising instructions for causing a computer system to perform the following operations:

establish a global context that can communicate with a plurality of resources, each resource residing in an associated local context;

communicate state information from one or more of the local contexts to the global context; and

maintain global navigation or history information, or both, based on the communicated state information.

45. The software of claim 44 further comprising instructions to enable a user of an application to move among resources based on the global navigation or history information.

46. The software of claim 45 further comprising instructions to display graphical controls with which the user interacts to move among resources.

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